



March 14, 2018

Re: Opposition to House Bill 5447
To: Members of the Education Committee
From: Steven Kant, M.D., CEO
Boys & Girls Village Special Education School, aka Charles F. Hayden School

Boys & Girls Village (BGV's) special education school, the K-12 Charles F. Hayden School, is approved by the State Department of Education (SDE). HB 5447, as currently drafted, would have a **significant negative impact** upon BGV's ability to respond to the ever-increasing demand from Local School Administrations (LEAs) to educate students with severe handicaps (typically social/emotional) who are unable to be educated by their local school system.

The current rate structure allows us to increase resources and expertise that are needed to educate students with higher and higher levels of underlying illness and compromised learning capacity. If private schools are stripped of their ability to set rates the cost will be borne by the LEAs and their students. Lower rates will invariably lead to less access due to a diminishment of resources.

Statewide standardized rate-setting for special education services invariably does not keep current with basic cost changes needed to meet students' unique needs or those of the LEAs. Freezing or reducing private special education reimbursement will not only impede access, it will result in a reduction in available expertise, poorer outcomes, less ability to return the students to their home schools and higher risk for all. Those students who need higher levels of resources—the very students most in need of outplacement, will pay the real price. In our experience with LEAs, what is most important to them is the *quality* of the work we do – and the expediency with which BGV can have the student ready to return to a less restrictive level of educational service back at their home school.

Our school rates already exist in a highly competitive rate-making environment. We compete with Children's Center of Hamden, Cedarhurst (Yale) and most notably the two RESCs — CES and ACEs. Both CES and ACEs are far larger than any of the private providers. Of great concern is that this legislation omits the RESCs from statewide standardized rate-setting by the State Department of Education. The RESCs are in fact public-private entities and as we must compete with them for students, even though they have far more resources. The RESCs' charge sets a market rate for any private provider of similar services
HB 5447, as currently drafted, calls for setting a state-wide standardized rate that only would apply to provider providers. The bill is unclear regarding the criteria or methodology to be used

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by SDE for setting rates. Applying these standardized statewide rates to only one segment of the service provider market will put all the private providers at a disadvantage to the RESCs, which dominate the provision of special education services.

BGV's rate reflects our commitment to providing intensive behavioral health/psychiatric services with specialized individual educational programming. The demand for this kind of service stems from the extraordinary rise of youth who present with severe and disabling behavioral/mental health issues. These range from issues of multiple psychiatric hospitalizations, extreme difficulty with aggressive behaviors, presence of threats of violence and high rates of victimization of others, as well as profound challenges emanating from histories of abuse and neglect. Many of the students we are treating now, in the not-too-distant past, would have been educated or cared for in out-of-state residential programs at a much higher overall cost. fixed rates as a cost containment measure does not address the real driver of costs, namely the ability, or lack of it, for the student to return to their home school in a timely fashion. Fewer and lower levels of resources will compromise Hayden schools' ability to provide the best education in as speedy a fashion as possible.